

KEEP IT LOCAL: RESOURCES FOR FARMERS' MARKET VENDORS

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KEEP IT LOCAL: RESOURCES FOR FARMERS' MARKET VENDORS

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Abstract

Farmers' markets are growing in Anchorage, Alaska and across the nation. Many of these markets sell more than produce and include non-produce farm goods, baked goods, cooked foods, craft items, and other products. Farmers' markets provide a low-cost and low-risk opportunity for people to start their businesses. One way to support these new businesses is to provide these microentrepreneurs with the information and skills they need to succeed.

This project describes the process undertaken to develop the Keep it Local program, a series of resources designed to provide information and teach participants the skills necessary to be successful at a farmers' market. I developed a website to provide information related to general business and specific topic related to different types of vendors including farmers, food vendors, and craft vendors. Several classes were offered, including Business Basics, Growing for Market, Booth Basics, and Tips and Tricks: Expert Advice. Participant feedback from the workshops was positive. I offer recommendations to improve upon and expand the current program to support farmers' markets throughout the state.

Acknowledgments

This project brought together different aspects of my life and many people contributed. I would like to acknowledge the Spenard Farmers' Market Board as well as the volunteers and vendors who participate in the Spenard Farmers' Market.

Participating in the process of creating and running a market was an inspiring, community-building endeavor. I enjoyed supporting and volunteering to build the type of community in which I want to live. This project was a great place-making exercise.

I learned so much from my Career and Technical Education (CTE) coursework and the project process. When I started this program, I needed online courses but I dreaded taking them. The CTE faculty were great at delivering engaging online courses, and I was thrilled with the classes. I also learned a lot from the students in my courses. They offered a wealth of experience that contributed greatly to my learning process.

The instructors of the Keep it Local workshops taught me much about teaching, learning, and putting together a program. Thank you to Marianne Kerr, my colleague and instructor of the Booth Basics workshop. We developed the plan for the Keep it Local program together. Her support, encouragement, and knowledge of adult education throughout the whole process proved invaluable. Thank you to my Business Basics instructor, Darlene Kawennano:ron Johnson, of Eagle Vision Consulting. She taught me about entrepreneurship through her teaching and sharing her story of business successes, challenges, and plans for the future. Thank you to UAF CES Horticulture Agent Julie Riley who has worked with refugee gardeners since 2004. This project developed into a program in conjunction with Catholic Social Services that assists refugees in acclimating

to life in Alaska. The Refugee Farmers' Market Program assists refugees in learning about gardening, money handling, customer service, business, and English skills by growing and selling produce at the Anchorage Market and Spenard Farmers' Market as Fresh International Gardens. Thank you to Michael Hanzuck who shared his knowledge and experience of operating a specialty food business, Alaska Salmon and Salsa. Thank you to Leslie Shalcross for sharing her knowledge of food businesses and lending her support and knowledge to this program and to me.

I also would like to thank my family who not only supported me through the long process of earning my master's degree but who also volunteered at the Spenard Farmers' Market. I would like to acknowledge my dog who was careful not to let me sit too long while writing and my cats who kept me warm while writing.

Table of Contents

	Page
Signature Page.....	i
Title Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures and Tables.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Literature Review	4
Cooperative Extension Service	6
Microentrepreneurs	7
Learning Theories	8
Adult Learning Theory	9
Constructivist Learning Theory	10
Cooperative Learning.....	11
Problem-Based Learning	11
Experiential Learning.....	12
Brain-Based Learning	12
Summary	13
Chapter 3 Method	14

	Page
Need for the Program.....	15
Audience, Advertising, and Recruitment.....	18
My Role, The Guide	20
Class Structure and Design	20
Classes Offered	21
Chapter 4 Discussion	25
Student Feedback	25
Strengths and Weaknesses	25
Changes to the Program	26
Expanding the Program.....	27
Recommendations.....	29
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	32
References.....	34
Appendix.....	38

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1: Number of voluntary Farmers Market Listings	4

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: 2013 Keep it Local Vendor Categories	16
Table 2: 2013-2014 Keep it Local Workshop Overview	20

Chapter 1 Introduction

It all began with a Facebook post in 2010. The post simply asked community members what they thought about founding a farmers' market in Spenard, a community just south of downtown Anchorage. I thought it was a great idea and responded. A few days later, I was asked to join the organizing committee, a pro-active group of community members who shared my positive interest in the farmers' market concept.

We first met at a local coffee shop in Spenard and shared many pro-active ideas. With many voices came many ideas, but several core concepts resonated with all of us as cornerstones for the market: Alaska Grown...affordable booths...community-centered. The mission became clear: To launch and grow a local, community-based market that provided consumers with fresh produce, creative arts, and local products in a fun and festive atmosphere. Key to our mission was ensuring that our vendors—farmers, food producers, fishermen, and crafts people—would be provided optimum marketing venues and opportunities. While we all recognized the value of attracting new visitors to Spenard, our first priority was ensuring that the market provided a warm and friendly environment for the unique and diverse community to shop, interact, and invest in their neighborhood (Spenard Farmers' Market, n.d.).

One of the most exciting opportunities of the Spenard Farmers' Market is that allows entrepreneurs to test a new business idea in a comfortable, low-risk environment. For example, those interested could potentially sign up for one date and try their business idea. If their concept is a success, they can apply for another market. At \$20 for a 10' x 10' booth space and \$10 for a micro-booth (3' x 3' tabletop), the market provides local

businesses with an incredibly affordable focus group. That was one of our objectives: To keep costs low and ensure that most anyone could have the opportunity to discover whether there was a market for their products.

I work for the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service (UAF CES) in Anchorage. The UAF CES provides outreach and education to the general public in an informal environment. I arranged to have a booth at the Spenard Farmers' Market several times over the summer, which was staffed by either UAF CES staff, faculty, or volunteers. These participants provided market-goers with information on a variety of topics including gardening, food preservation, tourism, health, youth, pest management, and many others. They also provided small businesses with technical information.

Through a partnership with the University of Alaska Center for Economic Development (UACED), I became the network developer for AKSourceLink, a website that connects small businesses to resources. For example, small business owners can search the online library located on the website that includes information on starting, managing, and expanding a business in Alaska. The online library also has information on licensing, legal topics, and marketing. Visitors can also search a database of business support programs that assist small businesses, including state and federal agencies (e.g., Made in Alaska, Small Business Administration, Alaska Grown), university programs (e.g., Small Business Development Center, UAF CES, UAA Center for Human Development), and non-profit programs (e.g., Alaska Business Development Center, Alaska Farmland Trust, Alaska Village Initiatives). While working on the

AKSourceLink program, I had the opportunity to learn about many educational and training resources available to small businesses in Alaska. While working entrepreneurs and support agencies, I learned about the importance of entrepreneurship education.

Through my Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes, I developed my own philosophy of education. Although some love to learn for the sake of learning, most people learn best when it is meaningful and relevant to their lives (Caine, Caine, McClintic, & Klimek, 2009). In fact, researchers have cited a lack of relevance in education as a primary contributor to high school dropout (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison, 2006). In contrast, I thought the focus on real-world applications was especially powerful in CTE, and this tenet of relevance could be an appropriate framework for my project.

In my capacity as the network developer for AKSourceLink, in the fall of 2012, I attended an Extension Small Business Resources Conference with a colleague. A representative from a CES in Arizona presented on a marketing class for farmers' market vendors. We decided this concept could work well in Alaska. From the idea to offer a class for farmers' market vendors came the Keep it Local website and workshops. The Keep it Local program brought together the needs of the vendors I had observed at Spenard Farmers' Market with the public outreach of UAF CES, entrepreneurial education of AKSourceLink, and learning theories of CTE. The results have been transformative and incredibly positive.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Farmers' markets are growing across the nation. Farmers' markets voluntarily listed in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) *Market Directory* doubled nationwide from 2,863 in 2000 to 6,132 in 2010 (Lohr, Diamond, Dicken, & Marquardt, 2011) and increased an additional 33% between 2010 and 2014 (USDA, n.d.). Figure 1 shows the steady increase in the number of farmers' markets in the United States.

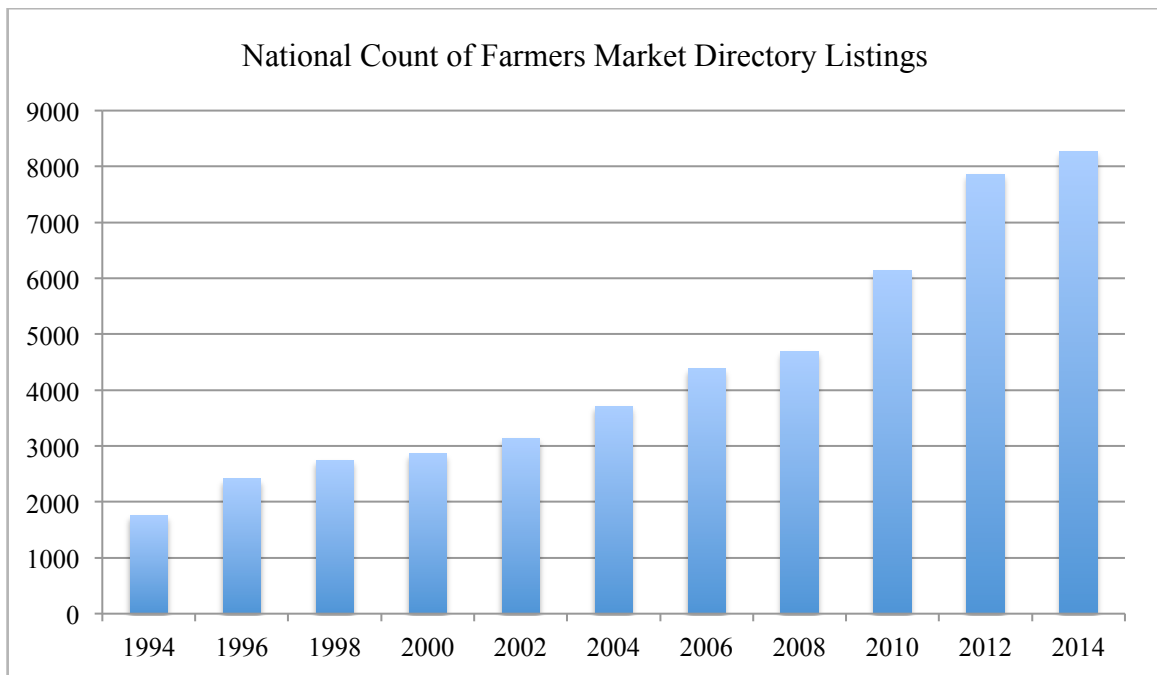


Figure 1. Number of voluntary farmers market listings each year in the national directory from 1994 to 2014 (USDA, 2014).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) designed the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food marketing program to strengthen local and regional food systems and to support and promote farmers' markets. Farmers' markets offer farmers new opportunities to sell their products, and they provide a larger share of the food dollar compared to what farmers earn selling their products to wholesalers (USDA, 2013).

Consumers also want to support agriculture and small business development in their local

communities by purchasing directly from growers at local farmers' markets (Tropp, 2014).

The State of Alaska Division of Agriculture offers farmers support in marketing their products. For example, the Division of Agriculture offers a variety of programs aimed to support farmers' markets, including a directory of all markets in the state. Additionally, the Alaskan Grown program assists farmers in marketing their products (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, n.d.a). As a result, farmers' markets in Alaska have grown remarkably over the last 10 years. In 2005, there were 12 markets statewide (A. Pettit, personal communication, November 22, 2014) and, as of 2015, there are 37 (Alaska Department of Natural Resources, n.d.b).

The increase in farmers' markets is not only in Alaska, a nationwide movement is moving toward local foods (Coit, 2008). Farmers' markets are a popular way to purchase local foods and to support small farmers who may have limited access to larger food sellers. In the United States, small farms account for 81% of local sales while large farms account for 93% of sales through intermediaries (Low & Vogel, 2011). Thus, small farmers are more dependent on direct-to-consumer than on wholesale sales. Small farmers are also more likely to engage in other types of entrepreneurial activities, such as forest products (e.g., timber, firewood, Christmas trees), agritourism (e.g., picking produce, hayrides, farm stays), and other farm-produced goods (Martinez et al., 2010).

There is also a nationwide trend toward handcrafted items. The number of craft shows has increased in the last 5-10 years, and over 300 magazines for crafts are in publication. Etsy.com is an ecommerce site devoted to the handmade movement and has

over 40 million members (Krugh, 2014). Some individuals sell on Etsy as a fulltime job, while others use it to support their hobbies or to earn extra money (Krugh, 2014).

Rob Kalin, the creator of Etsy, realized that his business depended of the success of other businesses that sell their wares in such a forum, and he hosts entrepreneurial workshops to develop users' business skills and lab spaces to hone their craft skills (Pan, 2008). The growing interest in farmers' markets, locally grown food, and handcrafted items has created opportunities for microentrepreneurs. Rob Kalin of Etsy supports his vendors through entrepreneurial workshops, and vendors at farmers' markets could be supported in similar ways.

Cooperative Extension Service

The CES plays a natural role in the development of farmers' markets, and this agricultural education and outreach department of the university extension has been involved in teaching farmers new skills for the last 100 years. Representatives of the CES originally worked to improve farming practices using on-farm demonstrations, field trips, and home visits. The CES expanded to develop cooperative marketing, fight diseases and pests, set-up 4-H clubs, advance public health, establish community gardens, and respond to emergency relief needs among other activities (Gould, Steele, & Woodrum, 2014).

Abel, Thomson, and Maretzki (1999) recommend that CESs continue to play an active role in farmers' markets because they offer farmers, consumers, and communities various benefits. Extensions can promote farmers' markets by giving information on their formation and management. Extensions can also promote the formation of farmers' markets in low-income communities that may not have access to fresh produce. Further,

extensions can disseminate information to consumers on how to use and preserve the products they purchase, as well as educate on food safety. Most notably in relation to my program, Abel et al. (1999) posited that extensions could assist “by offering workshops for vendors in business management, advertising, marketing, bookkeeping, personnel management and food preservation. Present farmers’ market vendors and those that are considering selling at markets in the future can benefit from such workshops” (p. 162). Supporting farmers’ market vendors through education and outreach fits well with the CES mission.

Microentrepreneurs

Microenterprises are smaller than the Small Business Administration-defined small business and they typically have five or fewer employees with startup costs of less than \$35,000. These types of businesses represent 9 out of 10 businesses in Alaska (Association for Enterprise Opportunity, n.d.), which mirrors the national ratio.

Microenterprises are often second jobs for people to earn extra spending money or to provide extra income to move out of poverty. These businesses may also provide extra income for retirees or for youth who are still in school. Given the diversity of foci, people from every walk of life engage in microentrepreneurship.

The Power of One in Three initiative states that if one in three microenterprises hired one employee, the United States would be at full employment (Association for Enterprise Opportunities [AEO], 2011). A study of organizations dedicated to assisting in the creation of microenterprises showed that these organizations serve a diverse range of clients. Almost 60% of clients are women, just over half are people of color or

underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, and just under half are below the 150% poverty guidelines (Aspen Institute, 2012).

Microenterprises are found in a variety of industry areas. Just as there is not one typical entrepreneur, there is not one typical business. Muske, Woods, Swinney, and Khoo (2007) found that microenterprises operate in a variety of industries. Their study focused on Oklahoma where 25.1% of microenterprises were in services; 20.9% in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; 15.2% in retail; 12.3% in construction; 11.8% in finance; 6.6% in transportation; and 3.3% in wholesale. They also found that these industry percentages varied depending on whether the business was operated in urban or rural areas. Similarly, I observed a variety of businesses at the Spenard Farmers' Market.

Farmers' markets have quadrupled in number over the last 20 years, and the handcraft movement has grown as well. Nearly 90% of the businesses in Alaska and the United States are microenterprises. To support these businesses, the CES provides education and outreach for the public (microentrepreneurs and community members) in an informal setting, which approaches adult education and learning differently compared to traditional college settings.

Learning Theories

In designing workshops for an adult microentrepreneur audience, it is important to explore appropriate learning theories. Some learning theories align nicely considering the audience, setting, and subject matter. Generally, people starting microenterprises are adults. The CES has a non-formal approach to education that emphasizes experiential learning, which is a preferred method of learning among the adult population. The developers of the Keep it Local workshops used adult learning theory as the basis of this

program. While the workshops were designed for adults, they do not exclude adolescents.

Adult learning theory. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) described an adult learner in relation to the self-concept, world experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. Adult learners have moved from being dependent to being self-directed, and their world experience assists them in their learning. Their orientation to learning is centered on information and skills that can help them with their tasks and problems. Further, their motivation to learn is typically internal and intrinsic. In the case of microentrepreneurs, their intrinsic motivation to learn is rooted in their desires to create successful business plans to develop lucrative and sustainable businesses.

Non-formal education can be difficult to define and is often categorized by what it is not, rather than what it is. A critical point that Kleis, Lan, Meitus, and Tiapula (1973) made was that non-formal education is different from formal education in that it is focused more so on the mission of education than on the form that education takes. Kleis et al. (1973) defined non-formal education as follows:

Non-formal education is any intentional and systematic educational enterprise (usually outside of traditional schooling) in which content, media, time units, admission criteria, staff facilities and other system components are selected and/or adapted for particular students, populations or situations in order to maximize attainment of the learning mission and minimize maintenance constraints of the system. (p. 6)

This definition aligns with the type of non-formal instruction that the CES provides.

Specifically, the UAF CES (n.d.) mission is as follows:

The Cooperative Extension Service Mission is to interpret and extend relevant research-based knowledge in an understandable and usable form; and to encourage the application of this knowledge to solve the problems and meet the challenges that face the people of Alaska; and, to bring the concerns of the community back to the university.

The CES takes a specific learner-centered approach to non-formal education.

This approach to education does not mean that learning theories are not applied; rather, it means that certain learning theories are more appropriate for the type of education that CES delivers. Specifically, the CES emphasizes applied learning and practical skills. A variety of learning theories are effective for adult populations in a non-formal setting, including constructivist learning theory, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, experiential learning, and brain-based learning.

Constructivist learning theory. Constructivism is learner-centered and it holds that each learner constructs his or her own knowledge and meaning from experience. I feel that constructivism is useful for adults because they have more life experience than children and adolescents. Within constructivism, knowledge is the result of active thinking by the learner. Knowledge has roots in neurological, social, cultural, and language-based interactions. Cognition is a process whereby the individual changes his or her behavior to be more favorable given different environments and to make sense of an experience; however, it might not represent reality (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). A variety of microenterprises exists, and any one source of information will have varying

applicability for learners. In line with constructivist theory, the onus of responsibility is on the learner to figure out how to apply the information to his or her microenterprise.

Cooperative learning. Cooperative learning (often called collaborative learning) is a natural fit to be successful at a farmers' market. Cooperative learning occurs when students work as a group toward a common goal (Gokhale, 1995). According to Gokhale (1995), compared to individual learning, students engaged in cooperative learning activities perform remarkably better at critical thinking skills and marginally better at drill-and-practice skills.

The CES actively engages learners through cooperative learning (Sobrero & Jayratne, 2014) by exploring new methods of learning with new technologies. Farmers' market vendors also achieve greater success when they work cooperatively with others. At the Spenard Farmers' Market, I observed vendors who collaborated to develop special offers when customers made purchases from other vendors. Additionally, many interactions between vendors were cooperative instead of competitive, which can be reinforced with cooperative learning.

Problem-based learning. Problem-based learning engages students in an authentic way. In problem-based learning, students tackle a problem or scenario that they might encounter in the real world, and then they work together to find a solution (Savery, 2006). Using problem-based learning engages students on multiple levels. For example, by using real world scenarios, students find the learning relevant. Because individuals do not operate in isolation, using groups of learners engages them socially and reflects authentic circumstances more accurately. Problem-based learning also offers the opportunity for cooperative learning as individuals to address problems together.

Experiential learning. Experiential learning is a powerful approach to non-formal education and has been part of the CES nearly from its beginning. Dewey (1938) first introduced experiential learning theory in the early part of the 20th century. This theory is based on the concept that learning occurs when the individual connects past and new experiences and then reflects and applies the information (Torock, 2009). Scaffolding can enhance the process of experiential learning with a tutor who guides the learning process. This process involves recruiting the learner, simplifying the task, focusing the learner on the task, highlighting critical learning points, reducing frustration, and demonstrating the process (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Joplin (1981) suggested that experiential learning is a five-step process that includes focus, action, support, feedback, and debriefing. Extension clientele prefer their learning experiences to include opportunities for hands-on activities (Richardson, 1994), and experiential learning provides this format.

Brain-based learning. Brain-based learning brings neuroscience into learning. Caine and Caine (1990) advanced 12 principles as the basis of brain research. Each principle has to meet the following four criteria: (a) applies to all people everywhere, (b) is supported by research from several disciplines, (c) anticipates future research, and (d) is relevant to practice. The most relevant principles to consider for adult education in an informal setting include (a) the brain is social, (b) emotions are crucial to patterning, (c) the brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously, (d) learning is physiological, and (e) learning is enhanced by challenging work and inhibited by passive learning. Being mindful of these physiological needs, instruction should engage learners with one another, incorporate humor and positive emotions, include relevant examples, engage the

senses through physical activity, and take place within a comfortable and relaxed learning environment.

Summary

There is an increased interest in locally grown food and handcrafted products, and the increase in the number of farmers' markets reflects this trend. Microentrepreneurship can contribute to personal wealth, and farmers' markets represent an opportunity for microentrepreneurs to try out their business. The CES can provide education and outreach for the public on a variety of topics in an informal learning setting. Providing education and outreach for farmers' market vendor aligns well with its mission; therefore, the goal of this project was to develop programming that could contribute to microentrepreneurs' success at the farmers' market.

Chapter 3 Method

I have been a volunteer at the Spenard Farmers' Market since its inception in 2010. I have helped recruit vendors, volunteers, and staff; developed marketing and promotions, assisted with set-up and takedown, and engaged in fundraising. While working with the Spenard Farmers' Market, I have noticed that many vendors are new to the business of selling their products. They often have fabulous products, but no signage or poor displays. Many vendors who apply for booth space have no prior business or retail experience. Additionally, I have occasionally observed vendors being rude to their customers, which indicates a need for customer service training. The Keep it Local program was developed in response to these needs.

Need for the Program

I thought this program could fill the gap in knowledge of existing resources. A lot of information is available for those interested in becoming farmers' market vendors, including rules and regulations for selling produce and food, information on planning a business, and resources to assist small businesses. However, this information is available on a variety of state, federal, and university websites, rather than in a central location. I thought it would be helpful to put all of the information about being a farmers' market vendor in one place.

I applied a backwards design framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) by thinking of factors that would be most beneficial to become a successful vendor at a farmers' market. I wanted people to have the confidence to become vendors and I wanted vendors to have the skills and knowledge to be successful in their endeavors. I thought that workshops and a website could promote these aims. Specifically, success would come

from selling more products and by pricing products accurately to ensure that they covered the cost of materials and labor.

Ultimately, I wanted students to learn what it would take to have a successful business through effective business planning. The business planning process can help new microentrepreneurs think through the many aspects of starting a business. Edgcomb (2002) examined effective microenterprise training and found that clients who participated in a business technical assistance program were 24% more likely to start their businesses by the end of the training and 45% more likely to have secured financing for their business.

I also wanted students to be aware of the resources that could assist them with various business aspects. Thus, I developed three workshops and created a website that provided vendor information. The Business Basics workshop was designed for any small business and focused on introductory business principles. The Growing for Market workshop was developed for farmers and focused on the production of produce. The Booth Basics workshop was developed to teach vendors how to display products optimally in a booth or a retail establishment. I later incorporated a fourth workshop, Tips and Tricks: Expert Advice, in response to discussions from a panel of experienced vendors and subject matter experts.

The Keep it Local website was developed to bring together the relevant information and to be a resource for workshop participants. On this website, microentrepreneurs can find information about becoming vendors, they can register for workshops, or get news on new market opportunities. I created three main pages, an interest list or registration page, a resources page, and an announcement page.

The registration or interest list was included on the main page of the website. When classes were available, this pages served as the registration page to sign up for workshops. When no workshops were available, people could enter their contact information and indicate courses they were interested in attending. This information could be used to develop new workshops.

To develop the resources page, I first gathered all available resources and categorized them into general resources that assist all vendors. I then divided specialized resources into the three main vendor categories: farm, food, and craft. In the farm section, I included links to the Division of Agriculture Farmers' Market Manual, a publication that details weights and measurements for farmers' market vendors, farm safety website, and a listing of Alaska Farmers' Markets. The food section included links to state and local regulations and permits for food vendors. The craft section included links to the Made in Alaska program and the State Council on the Arts. These sections formed the core of the static information on the website. Table 1 presents an overview of the workshop attendance in these categories.

Table 1

2013 Keep it Local Vendor Categories

	Farm	Craft	Food	Other
Business Basics	2	6	4	2
Growing for the Market	12	1		
Booth Design	4	6	3	2

Note: This table shows varying workshop attendance by category.

Finally, the website offered news of interest to farmers' market vendors. I created the announcement page to post information about new classes, publications, and other news relating to markets. People could sign up to receive notifications when new

announcements were posted. Examples of announcements include the availability of the 2014-2015 Alaska Grown Source Book and upcoming classes (e.g., the Specialty Food Business Class in January 2015). This part of the website served as a way to highlight new information. The Appendix includes a screen capture of the Keep it Local homepage and the complete website URL.

The website was the starting point for the program and the point at which it can grow and change depending on circumstances. This website was also one method to bring information to vendors. The classes were the other method used to relay the information and to teach new skills.

Audience, Advertising, and Recruitment

Once the website was developed, I needed to communicate its availability and advertise the accompanying workshops. To assist vendors in their success, I needed to reach out to them. My primary audience was current and potential farmers' market vendors. These individuals included farmers, crafters, and food vendors. Although my project was designed for adult farmers' market vendors, it could also be useful for youth selling at a market, small retailers, and people selling at a variety of fairs.

I marketed the workshops in a number of ways. For example, I reached out to other farmers' markets and to the Alaska Farmers' Market Association, a statewide organization of farmers markets, over the phone and through email. I also contacted the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture. I contacted all local Anchorage farmers' market organizers and asked them to pass along information about the workshops to their vendors. I also asked organizers for information about their markets and vendors to get input into their educational needs. In doing so, I was able to

develop classes that were responsive to vendors' needs and timely. It also helped that I contacted organizers during the off-season because they had more time to thoughtfully consider my requests. During market season, they would have been too busy.

My Role, The Guide

In pursuing my degree in CTE, I have learned a lot and have developed my own philosophy of education that works for me as a learner and an instructor (guide). I believe that the instructor's job is not just to impart knowledge, but to serve as a guide or coach in the learning process. I have found that the constructivist approach most closely aligns to my philosophy of education. I also think that behavioral, cognitive, and other educational approaches are valid and useful as they all offer insight; therefore, I incorporate elements of each in my praxis.

In developing the classes, I wanted my role to be that of a facilitator. I knew that I did not have all the answers or skills to meet all students' needs; therefore, I observed to determine the needs vendors might have, located and gathered information, and recruited instructors who had the expertise and the skills to teach the different workshops. I also prepared the resources for the classes, introduced instructors, and presented the Keep it Local website and small business resources. I worked with the instructors during the workshops to connect the presentations and activities to the farmers' market. As a facilitator, I also assessed each workshop. I received student feedback on what information was useful, what was lacking, and what needs were still unmet. The instructors also offered insight into what information they felt might be useful in the future.

Class Structure and Design

Instructors were chosen for each workshop based on their relevant expertise. Each instructor was asked to address customer service in his or her presentation as well as the workshop topic. As advocated from an experiential learning approach, I wanted to create hands-on interactive workshops. Richardson (1994) found that CES clientele were also interested in this approach. Thus, the workshops were each 2 hours long and included the following elements:

- 20-minute introduction (overview, resources, and instructor introduction)
- 70-minute presentation
- 15 minutes for questions and answers
- 15 minutes for an evaluation

Each workshop included time for participants to ask questions and to interact and learn from one another, which followed the premise of learning being a social activity as suggested by brain-based learning theory. In adult education, the students bring life experience with them, and following constructivist learning theory, they have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge from the information presented in the workshops. Many participants had experience as market vendors or customers, and the instructors were able to relate these experiences to the skill presented, which enhanced understanding. The instructors asked students to reflect on and share their experiences as customers and vendors. For example, in Booth Basics the instructor presented photos of various booths for students to look at and asked them to reflect on the booths they liked and their own experience setting up booths. She demonstrated a few techniques, and

allowed students the opportunity to work with different materials to set up a table. This technique allowed students to incorporate their own experiences thoughtfully.

Classes Offered

Three classes were planned for Spring 2013 and three for Spring 2014. Business Basics, Growing for Market, and Booth Basics were taught in 2013. Business Basics, Booth Basics, and Tips and Tricks were planned for 2014; however, Booth Basics was canceled due to low enrollment. Table 2 presents an overview of the classes.

Table 2

2013-2014 Keep it Local Workshop Overview

Perceived Need	Workshop	Topics	Format	Attendees
Vendors new to business; need business planning, marketing, and customer service skill development	Business Basics (2013 & 2014)	Entrepreneurship, Business planning, Marketing, Customer service	Lecture 2013 - self-reflection & group activity 2014 - discussion	14 (2013) 2 (2014)
Few produce vendors, knowledge of what to grow for market and how to grow it.	Growing for Market (2013)	Produce to grow, How to grow, How to sell	Lecture & discussion	13
Unattractive booths, poor customer service skills	Booth Basics (2013)	Attractive display, Customer service skills, Marketing	Discussion, presentation, critique, activity	15
Vendors not following regulations	Tips and Tricks: Expert Advice (2014)	Regulations for produce & prepared/specialty foods	Panel presentation, Q&A	5

Note: This table describes workshop topics, format, attendance and attendance.

Business Basics 2013 and 2014. Business Basics addressed the need I observed for business planning, marketing, and customer service skills. This class was developed for students who were unfamiliar with running a business, particularly microentrepreneurs. The learning objectives for this workshop were to understand the components and importance of a business plan, incorporate the five pillars of customer service (smile, greet, body language, eye contact, and thank you), create a 2-minute persuasive speech for the business, and acquire new marketing ideas. The format of the workshop was a combination of lecture, self-assessment, and group activities. I recruited an experienced business educator who was also a small businessperson with extensive experience selling at craft fairs; therefore, she was able offer relevant real world examples.

This workshop incorporated a variety of activities, including hands-on learning that involved cooperative and problem-based learning. For one activity, participants were divided into groups of three and were given a slip of paper with a company profile. They were asked to come up with a marketing idea as a group and then present their ideas to the whole class to vote on the best idea.

The instructor also engaged students in a workshop evaluation activity that was divided into two sections: pluses and wishes. The pluses included things that the students really enjoyed and the wishes were things that they wished were included. Angelo and Cross (1993) indicated that when students were allowed to critique rather than judge, data are more helpful to improve a class. During this evaluation activity, I observed more constructive feedback compared to classes in which standard evaluations were given.

The Business Basics workshop was repeated in 2014. Only two individual participated in the 2014 class, therefore, the instructor adapted the class to a discussion style. She also provided the two students with business consultations.

Growing for Market 2013. The Growing for Market workshop addressed the need for produce growers at the market. To turn a profit on produce at the market, microentrepreneurs need to know what to grow, how to grow it, and how to sell it. Thus, these were the objectives for the workshop. The format of the workshop was a lecture with accompanying PowerPoint, a discussion, and a question and answer session.

For this workshop, it was helpful to have an instructor who was involved in all aspects of growing and selling at a farmers' market. Because this workshop was tailored to farmers and included grower-specific information, it was useful to have a separate workshop for this audience. An example of the specificity and applicability of this workshop for this niche audience relates to state regulations. For example, if a vendor sells produce by weight, he or she must have the scale tested by Weights and Measures at the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (n.d.). A simple solution if a vendor cannot afford a scale is to sell by the bag or bunch. This type of information enabled participants to learn what type of equipment was available, rules and regulations associated the equipment, and ways to sell without the equipment. This specific information made this class helpful and relevant.

Booth Basics 2013. The Booth Basics workshop addressed the need I observed for attractive displays and good customer service skills at farmers' markets. The workshop objectives were to learn customer service and marketing basics and to learn how to create an attractive display. The format of the class was a discussion (of purpose),

presentation (marketing and display), critique (photos of booths), and hands-on activity (create display).

The instructor for this class had a degree in adult education and extensive experience setting up booths for a variety of purposes. She created the hands-on experiential class format. The instructor minimized the lecture component of the class and concentrated on activities and discussion to engage participants. One activity was a critique of photos from booths at farmers' markets, which encouraged participants to think critically about effective displays. Participants also created a display using a variety of materials, including tables, baskets, boxes, tablecloths, and other assorted items.

The 2014 Booth Basics workshop was cancelled because only two people signed up. I sent the potential participants an email that included web-based resources and the Keep it Local website URL. I also provided them with my contact information in case they had any questions.

Tips and Tricks: Expert Advice 2014. The Tips and Tricks workshop addressed the need to better understand regulations that apply to farmers' markets. The state imposes specific regulations for produce, prepared food, and specialty food. The objectives of this workshop were to learn the regulations for the topic areas, learn where to find the regulations, and learn who to ask for assistance. The format of this workshop was a panel presentation with a question and answer period.

Summary

This chapter discussed the implementation of my project: developing the website and workshops, and working with instructors to develop four classes tailored to the

microentrepreneurship audience. It presented the audience, objectives, and enrollments for each of these workshops. Chapter 4 will further evaluate this work.

Chapter 4 Discussion

The Keep it Local workshops attracted a variety of people and businesses. The age of participants ranged from teenagers to retirees. Vendors sold produce, kombucha, handmade purses, garden plants, hand-dyed wool, jewelry, computer services, funnel cakes, dog treats, and more. Additionally, participants were diverse and included students, teachers, refugees, homemakers, employed, and unemployed.

Student Feedback

Student evaluations were not included in this project as they were completed as part of a class activity and were not intended for research or publication purposes. However, the substance of the student feedback was summarized and described in an overview of each class. Based on these overviews, responses were positive to the Keep it Local program. Participants enjoyed learning specific skills that they could apply to their businesses. The marketing exercise in Business Basics gave them ideas that they could implement. The Growing for Market class offered specific recommendations on what to grow and how to package the produce for sale. The Booth Basics class offered information on how to set up a booth, and I saw participants implement these strategies during the farmers' market.

Strengths and Weaknesses

I felt that bringing in experts who had experience with the market and subject matter was effective for these workshops. It was helpful for me to be there and work with the instructors during each workshop. This collaboration enhanced the effectiveness of the program, as I was able to supplement the information with specific resources and ideas and answer many participants' business- and market-related questions.

Tailoring handouts to different vendor categories and providing them in class and online also worked well. People were able to choose the handouts that pertained to their businesses. The website was also a useful place where people could get the information from home. For example, some people were interested but unable to attend the classes; therefore, I could refer them to the website for more information.

A weakness of the program was the low participation in the 2014 workshops, which was likely because of a later start date. It seems that the February and early March workshops had better attendance. The Tips and Tricks workshop was included information on regulations for food and farm vendors. Although a workshop on regulations was helpful, I think it may have been better to have separate workshops to address regulations for farmers and for food businesses, as there is no significant overlap in their needs.

Changes to the Program

Related to scheduling, the 2014 workshop series was held later in the year because of instructor conflicts, and classes were pushed back into the end of April and early May. This was not an ideal scenario, and the later classes may have contributed to the marketing and display class being canceled because of low registration and attendance in the other workshops. I believe that early spring is not the ideal time to offer these courses because vendors are focused on preparing for the market. Many farmers' markets begin around the end of May. Therefore, February and March allows vendors to plan for the upcoming season and implement what they learned in the workshops. Future workshops should be mindful of these time considerations.

Regarding content, I might approach the concept of entrepreneurship differently. Specifically, some think entrepreneurship is for the risk-takers and those with sophisticated business plans. However, I think this sets the bar too high, and I would like people who are interested in low-risk microbusinesses, such as selling at a farmers' market, to have the confidence and opportunity to do so. I would also like the business workshop to encourage participants to try these low-risk opportunities.

When considering additional workshop topics, I would like to involve the City of Anchorage in a food business workshop. For example, a food research technician in Fairbanks teaches a specialty food business course at the UAF CES. This course focuses on developing and managing a specialty food business and includes information on state regulations for these businesses. Because Anchorage has additional regulations for food businesses, I would like to involve the city in the class and potentially in writing a publication that targets those interested in starting a food business in Anchorage. At this time, the Anchorage regulations are in the resources section of the Keep it Local website. I would like to put the publication in this section as well.

Expanding the Program

To reach more people who might not be able to attend the workshops, I would like to create a series of YouTube videos with tips for farmers' market vendors. For example, one video could be on booth setup. I would include photos of great set-ups and point out the techniques that made the booth designs effective. Videos on setting up a tent and techniques for merchandising would be effective because of the highly visual nature of the video content. Another way I could reach a larger audience would be to

upload the PowerPoint to SlideShare or other presentation-sharing site linked to the Keep it Local website.

I would also like to use social media to connect people with the information in a more dynamic way. Social media could help direct attention to seasonally appropriate content and resources. I could use social media to share the YouTube videos and SlideShare presentations as well as other useful information for vendors. Specifically, I could create Keep it Local Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest accounts. This strategy would work well with existing programs, such as Made in Alaska, Alaska Grown, and Alaska Loyal, as all of these programs currently use social media. I think creating a strong social media presence would allow me to get the information out to a broader audience.

While conducting the classes, someone asked if there were any workshops in the Matanuska-Sustina region, which is 40 miles north of Anchorage and is where most farmers in the region are located. This comment underscored that other communities could implement this series of workshops. Therefore, expanding this program could support small vendors in other communities. Other communities could recruit local business vendors and educators to present at workshops. They could also arrange presentations using outside resources through the Online with Libraries (OWL) network or other distance delivery education networks. Finally, they could use resources on the Keep it Local website and supplement their workshops with local resources. Although there are around 10 markets serving the Anchorage area, some communities may only have one market. In smaller communities, the availability of online resources would be a key to assisting vendors.

Recommendations

Farmers' markets are an opportunity for people to test their business ideas. There are many ways that CES can assist them. A variety of ways exist to build upon this project. I recommend added a survey component, changing the timing, adding new classes, and looking into other opportunities for vendors beyond farmers' markets.

I recommend conducting a survey and interview to assess vendors' needs. Such data collection efforts would enable program developers to ensure the right materials are available and to tailor or add additional workshops to meet participants' needs. I recommend adding a survey approximately 6 months after the workshop to determine which techniques were implemented over time and how the workshop helped participants.

I also recommend several changes in the timing, setting, and structure of the workshops. Specifically, workshops should be held earlier in the year. February or the beginning of March are ideal times because people are in the planning stage for summer activities. By the end of March and beginning of April, they should have already planted their starts, made their crafts, and applied for a market. The timing of the workshops was crucial for attendance.

Because of transportation, scheduling, or other issues, I recommend holding all the workshops on the same day. General workshops could be grouped together and specialty workshops could be held at the end of the day. It may also be more effective to hold workshops at a community center instead of at the UAF CES office. Changing the location could bring the program into the community and help people who have limited transportation access.

I learned a lot from each presenter, and recommend that effective methods be replicated. For example, the presenter for the business course obtained student feedback (Pluses and Wishes) at the end of the workshop using a white board. I recommend this technique be used in all workshops. This technique added valuable participant feedback, and it was different from standard evaluations. I received more ideas for improvement using this technique than other methods.

Regarding future content, I recommend additional workshops to include social media, food business, and youth programs. Social media is an inexpensive and easy way for vendors to market their products and connect with their consumers. It would also be useful to offer a course for food businesses at the market because I saw food vendors shut down at markets due to not following the regulations. Further, adolescent vendors are a consistent presence at the Spenard Farmers' Market; therefore, I think a course designed for adolescents would be useful. This additional future content is recommended to meet the needs of the market participants as observed and documented in the literature.

I have done presentations on social media for 2 years at the Alaska Rural Small Business Conference as part of a small business workshop. Based on this experience, I further recommend a workshop where participants set up their social media accounts and start posting. Social media represents a low-cost opportunity for vendors, and it taps into the trend of buying locally. Additionally, programs such as Alaska Grown, Made in Alaska, and Alaska Loyal already have social media presences. This topic could be covered through a class, YouTube videos, resources on the website, and by other means.

Vendors also have opportunities outside of farmers' markets. For example, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), direct sales to restaurants, selling to schools,

and other opportunities. Having information available would help vendors explore these opportunities as well. Additionally, farmers' markets may not be the best solution for all vendors and having information on other opportunities might be helpful.

Summary

Ultimately, the workshops were successful, both in headcount and feedback from the participants themselves. However, their timing and execution merit consideration for future. Moreover, additional topics and areas of need have been identified, which suggest an opportunity to expand not only the workshops, but also the offerings on the Keep It Local website and social media.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

After 5 years of volunteering at the Spenard Farmers' Market, it has been great to see the market create community by bringing together businesses (e.g., farmers, crafts food vendors), non-profit social entities (e.g., transportation, pet, wildlife, recycling, humanitarian), music, and customers. The Spenard Farmers' Market also created a community of vendors. It was fun to see new vendors from the Keep it Local workshops using the skills they learned.

Farmers' markets are one way for farmers to make more money from their produce by selling directly to consumers. Farmers' markets also provide a low-risk environment for vendors to start their businesses. The Keep it Local program was designed to help vendors find the information and skills they need to make their businesses more successful. The classes and website began to remove barriers to that information. I would like to provide more resources, such as the website, that vendors can access when they needed it (e.g., middle of the season) but might not have time for a class.

I would also like to explore other ideas for how the CES can support farmers' markets and local agriculture. Working to strengthen all farmers' markets and vendors in Anchorage and around the state of Alaska through education, outreach, and marketing of the social, economic, and health benefits of farmers' markets is one of my future goals. The success of the Spenard Farmers' Market has inspired Northeast Anchorage Community Councils to explore starting a community farmers market (Kelly, 2014). The Spenard Farmers' Market was a pleasure and great learning experience. It was inspirational to see people from different parts of the community come together to create

something unique. What the Spenard Farmers' Market did is a testament to its strength and its potential to be a model of a quality and community engaged-market, and I am proud to have been a part of that effort.

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Appendix: Keep it Local Homepage

Keep it Local

Getting ready for your local market

Keep it Local Interest List



Keep it Local: Getting ready for your local market started with 3 workshops: business basics, urban gardening and display. These courses are designed to give vendors and potential vendors of farmers markets and events the information they need to be successful. If you have any additional comments or questions please contact Lisa Wedin alwed@alaska.edu 786-6341.

Name

Contact

Email address or phone number

What type of products are you interested in selling?

You can choose more than one!

Keep it Local

News

- Alaska Grown 2014-2015 Source Book is out!
- Birch Tapping in Palmer
- Cooperative Extension assists small food businesses
- New Publication: Guide to Operating a Successful Home-Based Food Business
- Save the Date: Feb. 2015 Starting and Operating a Specialty Food Business Class
- Tips and Tricks: Expert Advice for Keeping It Local

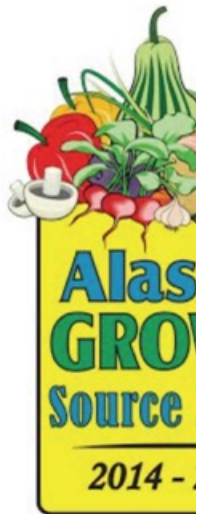
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• Any additional information

To receive a copy of the Source Book, contact Lisa Schade at 907-745-3441.

You may also [download](#) the Source Book.

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Starting and Operating a Specialty Food Business

Resources

General

- [Alaska Farmers Market Association List of Markets](#)
- [Buy Alaska](#)

Farmer

- [Alaska Farmland Trust](#)
- [2013 Alaskan Farmer's Market brochure \(Listing of Farmers Markets in Alaska\)](#)
- [Division of Ag Farmers Market Resource Manual](#)
 - [Vendor Information](#)
- [Measurement Standards: Ensuring Alaskans receive full measure at farmers markets and roadside stands](#)
- [Selling Fruits and Vegetables](#)
- [Project Green Leaf](#)
- [On Farm Food Safety Program](#)



Food

Anchorage

- [Anchorage Food Code information](#)
- [Serving Safe Food in Alaska](#)
- [Temporary and Seasonal Food Permit Information](#)

Alaska

- [State of Alaska Food Code](#)
- [UAF CES Small Food Business](#)
 - [Guide to Operating a Successful Home-Based Food Business](#)
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